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The book is supplied with a full index which adds to its value and usefulness.

JOHN C. HILDT.

*The Middle Group of American Historians.* By JOHN SPENCER BASSETT, Ph.D., LL.D. (New York: The Macmillan Company. 1917. Pp. xii, 324.)

THE writing of American history chiefly by New Englanders has been regarded in the South as an unhappy circumstance. This volume by Professor Bassett, a scholar of North Carolina origin and education, tends to set the balance even through the appraisal of New England historians by a Southern student of history. His "Middle Group" of writers and collectors of historical material is made up of Sparks, Bancroft, Prescott, and Motley, all New Englanders, and Peter Force, representing the Middle States. In his prefatory chapter on the Early Progress of History in the United States, he introduces—besides Bradford, Winthrop, Hutchinson, and Jeremy Belknap—a number of the colonial figures from all the regions of early settlement. The final chapter, on the Historians and their Publishers, is a brief account of the business arrangements under which many of the books touched upon in the earlier chapters were produced.

So much for the topics with which Professor Bassett has undertaken to deal. His method of handling them is both descriptive, or biographical, and critical. His chapters on Sparks and Bancroft make the largest contribution of fresh material, for many unpublished passages are drawn from the Sparks Manuscripts in the Harvard College Library, and still more from the Bancroft Manuscripts in the keeping of the Massachusetts Historical Society. It is twenty-four years since Herbert B. Adams published his *Life and Writings of Jared Sparks*. The first professor of history in an American college is already a somewhat mythical figure to scholars of the present generation. His name to-day owes something of its perpetuation to its having become a sort of synonym for the ruthless editor of manuscript records in pursuance of his own ideas of diction. Professor Bassett brings forward enough concrete instances of Sparks's method of dealing with the letters of Washington to remind a forgetful generation how far we have travelled on the road of trustworthiness. The same tendency, at an earlier point in his career, is illustrated by passages of correspondence between Bancroft and Sparks, when the latter was editor of the *North American Review* and handled his contributor's articles with a freedom which would have driven a less sensitive writer than Bancroft to fury. The contrast between past and present appears no less clearly in Professor Bassett's picture of the vast untilled field in which Sparks found himself a laborer, and of the manner in which he went about his task of assembling and dealing with his material. The chapter is both informing and discriminating.

The succeeding chapter, on George Bancroft, illustrates admirably the value of the employment of the same material by more than one person, for the foot-notes seem to indicate that more of the substance of this paper was drawn from material not used, though available for use, in the *Life and Letters of George Bancroft* than from the pages of that biography. The newly printed passages from Bancroft's correspondence throw fresh and revealing light upon phases of his long career, well summarized in about seventy pages.

A short chapter on Two Literary Historians adds less to the familiar knowledge of Prescott and Motley, for the good reason that there is less to add. Peter Force, the Compiler, the one remaining substantial division of the book, goes into many details of Force's collecting and of his relations with Congress. Its value is greater in the field of record than of interpretation.

There are few slips in the book to be noted. Mather, not Matthew, Byles, was "the celebrated Boston minister" mentioned on page 25. The Rev. Jedediah Morse, twice mentioned in the book (pp. 239, 306), spelled, or misspelled, his name "Jedidiah". The "noctograph" appliance which Prescott used in writing is misprinted "nocograph" (p. 214).

There are points in the book at which the details of authorship—the number of words in a volume, the financial outgo and income—seem to usurp the place of "the weightier matters of the law". There are other points at which the book would be better for something more of grace and flexibility of style. But it fills a place of its own in the record of American scholarship, and fills it well.

M. A. DeWOLFE HOWE.

*An Abridgment of the Indian Affairs, contained in Four Folio Volumes, transacted in the Colony of New York, from the Year 1678 to the Year 1751.* By PETER WRAXALL. Edited with an Introduction by CHARLES HOWARD McILWAIN, Assistant Professor of History in Harvard University. [Harvard Historical Studies, vol. XXI.] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press. 1915. Pp. cxviii, 251.)

THE irreparable loss to American scholarship caused by the fire in the State Library at Albany is gradually being mitigated by the publication of careful transcripts made by competent hands before the catastrophe occurred. In this category is Wraxall's *Abridgment*, of which Professor McIlwain gives so scholarly a presentation in this volume.

Peter Wraxall, secretary of Sir William Johnson and, as the editor shows, largely instrumental in securing his appointment as superintendent of Indian Affairs, had access to the records of the Albany Commissioners, who controlled these affairs for the province of New York